

An Interview with Meredith Smith at Sweet Antem



1. Please introduce yourself and your perfumes!

Hi, Meredith, thanks so much for an opportunity to share about my Natural Perfume House – Coeur d’Esprit Natural Perfumes. We are located in the French Quarter of Coquitlam, BC close to Vancouver.

My name is Lyn Ayre and I live in the Southwest corner of beautiful British Columbia. I am daily filled with a sense of appreciation and awe at the gifts of Gaia, our Mother Earth. Creating perfumes takes me to places of absolute peace, joy, and light and I am humbled in the presence of these wonderful substances; it is the epitome of excitement and, for me, the feeling of accomplishment is second to none.

An alchemist at heart, combining lyric with melody, scented water with oil, essences with alcohol, apples with carrots, phthlalo blue with titanium white, clay with water and fire, is all the same to me. It’s creation; it’s love; it’s life. My question is always, “I wonder what would happen if I...”

I take an Artisan approach to perfuming, designing and hand-crafting each one, drop by drop, balancing and harmonizing the essences into a cohesive whole. I begin creation with the *‘mysterious and romantic’* base notes; followed by the *‘heart and soul’* of the perfume, and lastly, the *‘meeters and greeters’*, which are called the head notes. My love and appreciation of the Natural World is imbued into every bottle.

I currently host the Canadian Artisan Natural Perfume group and we are discussing moving forward to create the Canadian Artisan Natural Perfumers Guild.



2. What does being a perfumer mean to you?

I didn't start out life dreaming of becoming a perfumer. I was just a regular girl with a regular life that had some awful spots and some awesome parts, just like most other people. As a teen, there were two career paths that made my juices flow – to become a medical doctor or a country/rock singer. I met my first husband in Sep 1969 when he was playing at a Legion close by. The rest, as they say, is history. We married in 1969 and were in Fairbanks, Alaska, on tour, the very next day. I chose music over medicine, though the latter has been a life-long passion, too, and, after 35 years of learning and practice, I earned a Ph.D. in Energy Healing.

I adored the natural world and yearned to know more about plants and flowers. When troubled, I often picked up a leaf, flower, pine cone, or sticky bud, and become a part of it. My mood would instantly change. I've become a Master Herbalist, too.

Scents were a huge part of my early life but not in the sense of perfume, as that came later. I have five siblings, so the smell of a baby's head is one of my first olfactory memories. The smell of the other end is still in my memory, too, but I think Eau de Poo would not be well-received somehow... lol ...

We spent our summers at the ocean beaches in South Surrey, BC, Canada and the scent of salty seas filled me with energy and galvanized me into action. I loved snow and could always detect when it was on the way. The forest, especially after a rain, opened deep inner desires within me. All of these, I wrote about and photographed. That I can now create scents that are similar to these fills me with a feeling of deep humility and gratitude.

We all create the 'Perfume of Life' as we go through our daily rounds: our parents cooking a savoury meal and the smell of it rising up to our rooms as we do our homework; incense taking our prayers up to Spirit; the corner bakery venting their enticing aromas into the neighbourhood; the hot sweaty aromas of human, deodorant, aftershave, and clean sheets – the bliss of the night; everything filling the air with their perfumes. Elusive, ethereal, effervescent... never to be truly captured; only to be enjoyed in the moment.

Aromas of my younger years included coffee in the morning, the bright smell of orange juice, the bite of cinnamon toast, the smoothness of hot chocolate with tiny marshmallows, the zest of grapefruit, the saltiness of a big bowl of popcorn, (Okay, anybody else getting hungry?)

Others include Lavender and Lilac sachets in my underwear drawer, the roses, lilies, and carnations blooming outside my bedroom window, creamy pearlescent bath beads, the whole array of Vanda and Avon beauty products, which I sold as a teenager. It amazed me that these little vials contained a liquid that smelled so good.

Writing this makes me want to go and blend some smelly bits... ambergris, seaweed, coffee and chocolate absolutes, lavender, rose, orris, cinnamon, grapefruit, bergamot... yummm! I have always been on the 'scent trail' (anyone else love that fantastic book?). I am the first one to smell smoke and I can also tell who has been in the room just by the scent they leave.

With five girls in my family, perfume was a big deal and we all like different scents. I remember my Grandma wore Evening In Paris and Crepe de Chine; and my Mom wore Roses Roses and Topaz; one of my sisters wore Heaven Scent; I wore Charlie, Tabu, Evening In Paris, and Navy, and when I grew up – Oscar, Opium, and Obsession. Now, instead of Obsession being my perfume, perfume is my obsession.

There really was no one defining moment and no one person who inspired me to pursue perfumery. The scents that abound around me inspired me to explore their depths and make my best attempt to create something new from them. I am growing into this role as natural perfumer and I love it. I enjoy being an Independent Natural Perfume Designer.



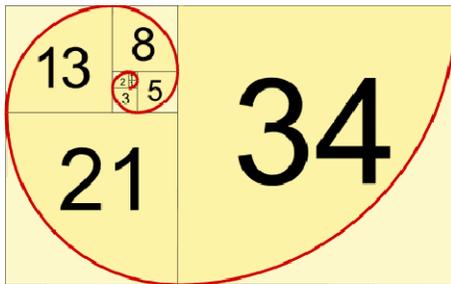
3. How did you begin your journey to perfumery?

I was led to my current path by that simple original comment my teacher made ten years ago 'your remedies smell more like perfumes than medicine', and, once finding it, there was no turning back no matter what. Learning to appreciate essential oils through the art of Aromatherapy, then realizing that I could make perfumes that would also work on a healing level fit right in with who I am in this world. Now, I've discovered my Fractal artwork marries nicely to my Fragrances and, I've added the sense of sound to that through the Tibetan singing bowls. Throughout my life, all the delicious smells in my world conspired to take me to the depths of their soul and expose me to the rich olfactory tapestry that life offers. I cannot imagine a life without scent, sight, and sound.

4. What is the perfumery process like for you? How do you see a perfume concept through to fruition?

My process is simple: Inspired by an idea, I go to the computer and see if the formula complies with the safety guidelines. I mentally consider the essences and how they go together and react with one another. I get the oils out, and begin blending, sniffing, adjusting, and testing. When

I'm happy, I stop and label, then set it aside to mature. This process can take many months to accomplish.



5. What are your favorite perfumery patterns or trends?

I don't really tend to follow trends; it's never been my way. I create my own path through my intuitive guidance.

For me, the patterns in nature are always inspiring and I've been following the path of the Fibonacci Sequence and Fractal Artistry. Fibonacci Numbers are found in nature – in the way the petals are arranged around a stamen; how the leaves are arranged on the branches, and the branches on the trees; in the dimensions of the face and body; in all spirals from the tiniest snail on the bottom of the ocean floor to the largest galaxy in the Universe.

These numbers are found in the formulae used to create Fractals. They are 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, and so on – always adding the last two numbers together to create the next number in the sequence.

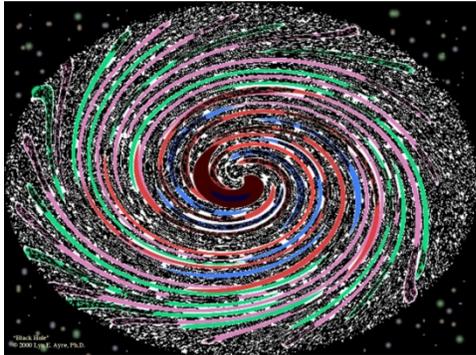
In Natural Perfumery, I use these figures to guide me in the number of drops of each essences; the percentage of dilution of the essences used in the formulae, the number of drops in each part of the formula; and the way the perfume spirals from one layer to the next.



6. What do you wish the community could gain from your olfactive artistry?

I do feel that most of us truly appreciate the root source of our essences and that many are aware of it while creating perfume. For me, there has always been this visual affect from scent

and I would like people to gain an appreciation for joining visual to olfactory for a more complete experience. Only my opinion, though.



7. If your perfumes could transport someone to another time or place, where or when would it be?

If this could be so, I would like folks to rise up out of their own personal lives, expand their consciousness, and see a big overview of the Universe and realize how important each one is in the dance of life and what kind of an impact each person's thoughts, feelings, and actions have in the bigger scheme of things. We don't operate in a vacuum and we do have an effect on everything in the Universe.



8. What are your top 5 favorite perfume notes, the ones you wouldn't mind being stranded on a deserted island with?

This is the easiest question of all: Labdanum, Ambergris, Orris Root Butter CO2 15% irones, Jasmine, and Bergamot. OMGosh, okay now I have to go make some perfume! I've not been able to get in my Atelier for weeks due to this respiratory issue.

9. What excites you the most about the artisan fragrance salon?

Seeing the people whom I met at the LA one and meeting the others, like you, that I've only e-talked to.

Getting my Fractals & Fragrances in front of a larger group of people all at the same time. I've done one small fair but I expect this will be quite different and I'm really looking forward to it.

10. How can we learn more about you and your brand?

I am always open to emails. LynAyre@telus.net

Also you can visit my website at www.scentofnature.net

and my Blog at <http://coeurdespritnaturalperfume.blogspot.com/>

As well as creating perfumes, and bath & beauty products, I also teach three perfume courses: a one-day intro to Natural Perfumery; a correspondence course, which has taken from 9 months to 2 years for students to complete; and a 5-day Perfume intensive, here at my Atelier.

Thanks so much for interviewing me; I appreciate your interest in my product.

Warmly, Lyn